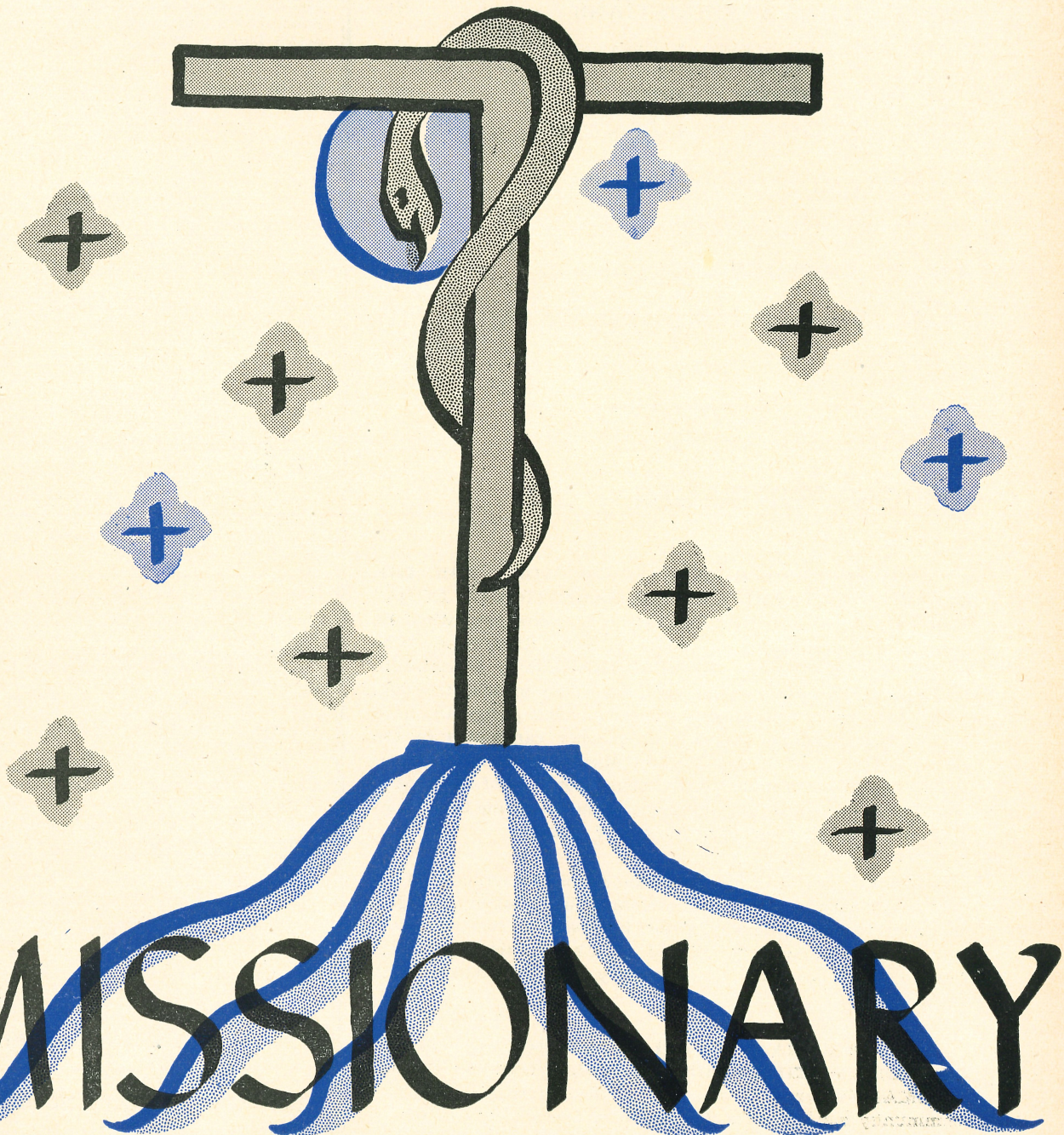
The MEDICAL MISSIONARY



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"WE OFFERED OURSELVES TO WORK FOR THE GLORY OF OUR LORD AND THE SALVATION OF INDIA" —wrote Father Sebastian Pinakatt four years ago, when he brought the first group of Indian Medical Missionaries-to-be to the Nurses' Training School at Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi. This year, having completed their medical training, these same young women have carried on their pledge and have begun their religious training as pioneer candidates in the first community of Indian Medical Mission Sisters. We commemorate this important step in the development of the apostolate in India by dedicating this issue of the magazine to our new sisters—the Medical Mission Sisters of Malabar.

MARI GIRI—MARY'S MOUNT— is the Motherhouse of the new community of Medical Missionaries in Malabar. Last November this foundation was blessed by His Excellency, the Most Rev. James Kalacherry, Bishop of Changanacherry, South India. On this occasion His Excellency gave the address— "A Dedication."

THE CHRISTIANS OF MALABAR TRACE THE ORIGIN OF THEIR FAITH TO THE APOSTOLIC LABORS OF ST. THOMAS. Father Pinakatt, who is the Director of the new community and himself a descendent of these early Christians, tells the story of how they kept the Faith for nearly two thousand years . . .

THE
MEDICAL MISSIONARY

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SISTER M. LOYOLA, S.C.M.M.
Editor

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The Motherhouse and Novitiate are located in Fox Chase, Philadelphia, Pa. There is also a House of studies in Brookland, Washington, D. C., and Houses of Postulate in England and Holland.

At present the Society labors in India, where the Sisters conduct Hospitals, dispensaries, maternity, and child welfare centers, training schools for native nurses and midwives, and similar health activities. It is the purpose of the Society to send Medical Missionaries to any mission field of the world. The Society has many requests; it needs many vocations.

For further information apply to:

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Philadelphia, Pa.

Heritage of Faith

The faith, planted nearly two thousand years ago in the hearts of the Christians of South India, bears fruit anew in a religious community —the Malabar Medical Mission Sisters.

In the jubilee year, 1925, the late Holy Father held a gigantic mission exhibition. It was a demonstration of the global activities of the Catholic Church, who constantly prays, suffers and labors that all may be One in Christ. Visitors to the exhibit agreed that the medical section was among the most impressive. It showed on the one hand the pitiful health conditions of the millions who sit in the shadow of ignorance and superstition, and on the other the torch of science penetrating deeper and deeper into the secrets of nature, bringing to light causes and remedies heretofore undreamed of. Such was the picture portrayed by the medical exhibit that Pius XI, on viewing it exclaimed: "We are living in times when unenlightened heroism is not enough!"

This pronouncement epitomizes the medical mission idea—heroic charity made effective by utilizing all the means and discoveries of modern medical science. In 1925 the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, after twenty-four years of providential preparation came into existence. It was in 1925 also, that the idea of an Indian Medical Mission Sisterhood was born in the heart of a Malabar seminarian, the Reverend Sebastian Pinakatt.

It was not until 1937, however, that Father Pinakatt's idea first came to the attention of our Society. In December of that year he wrote to me:

"I am a poor missionary working in the hills of South India in the native state of Travancore. It is seven years since I took charge of this center and I am the only priest here. To help me there is a Congregation of Poor Clare Sisters who teach in the mission school, give catechism lessons and prepare the children for Holy Communion, etc.

"Dear Mother, from experience it is admitted that today medical work is an essential factor for successful mission endeavor all over the world. My experience in the field also brings home this fact. I am sorry this very important phase is very much overlooked in the Catholic missions of South India. The death rate is very alarming, especially among women and children. Maternity and child welfare work is still unknown here. A little medical care or attention in time would save many women and children from premature death.

"Priests and sisters working in this tropical country are also faced with sudden death in the very prime of life or become incapable of work when attacked by one or other of the tropical diseases for want of proper medical care and assistance. Well organized Protestant medical missions take advantage of this and make use of their mission hospitals to dispose pagans to accept Christianity, as well as to protect the precious lives of their own missionaries.

"Dear Mother, this alarming sight has made me weep many a time and pray much to the Lord of the harvest to find some means of beginning at least a dispensary on a small scale. On reading an article about 'The Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries' in one of the English papers I resolved to write to you, hoping that you would give me help and wise counsels. I have no human means, but my holy cause is so much needed in South India. Will you kindly write whether you would be able to send some sisters to begin a hospital, or what sort of help you could provide for my poor people who are suffering from ailments of all kinds, malaria, typhoid, dysentery, etc. I will write more in detail after hearing from you."

NATIVE RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

And since, for the organization of the Church in our regions, it is necessary, as we have already said, that you make use of the elements from which by Divine Providence, it is composed, you ought, as a consequence, consider as one of the principal duties of your office, the founding of native religious communities of both men and women. Should not these new followers of Christ, when they feel themselves drawn to a more perfect life, take the vows of religion? And on this point, the missioners and nuns who labor in your dioceses should not let themselves be prejudiced by a love of their congregation, although this love is right and legitimate in itself, but let them learn to view these things with a certain broadness of vision. Accordingly if there are any natives desirous of joining the older congregations, it certainly would not be right to discourage them, or to impede them from joining, provided they give signs of being able to acquire the spirit of these congregations, and of being able to establish in their own countries houses of order, not unworthy of the congregation that they have joined; still let them ponder seriously and prayerfully the question whether it might not be more expedient to found new congregations such as may answer better the genius and character of the natives, and be more in keeping with the needs and spirit of the country. (from: Rerum Ecclesiae, Pope Pius XI)

Such a letter aroused, of course, interest and sympathy, but owing to the fewness of sisters we could not give much promise of immediate help. As a matter of fact, looking over the correspondence, I find that the only ray of hope lay in Father's prayers for a speedy increase of vocations.

But missionaries are not easily discouraged. They know from experience that with God's Providence, and determination and patience on their part, somehow or other projects come to life—"in the midst of the years"—when the time is ripe. Father Pinakatt, in spite of the poor prospects of assistance, sent a lengthy article describing health conditions in India. In March 1938 he wrote again:

> "From an article in the Catholic Digest of last October I learned more details about the beginning of your Society. I feel so determined in my poor will to undergo any difficulty and suffer any hardship to begin a mission hospital.
>
> "One point I wish to bring to your kind notice. There are many good vocations, especially among the St. Thomas Christians. The missionary spirit is strong among them. Men and women go to all parts of India as priests and sisters. Would it be wise if I called some good and generous souls and gave them some training in medical work and formed a congregation? My good bishop encourages me in this idea, but one difficulty is to get them trained. I would send a few to Rawalpindi if you could arrange for it . . . This last proposal I make as you have no members to spare who may come and work here."

In answering this proposal we mentioned the educational requirements for admission to the accredited training school at Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi, to which Father Pinakatt replied:

> "I am busy with the work of forming a native sisterhood on the lines of your Society—to begin at least a small hospital here. I am very much encouraged by your readiness to help me by all the means in your power. I have already found five good and zealous young ladies who have passed government examinations equal to matriculation. I hope this will suffice for admission into your nursing school, in compliance with government regulations. . . . It is my greatest desire that these young women be trained by your sisters according to the constitutions and rules of your Society."

Consequently, on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, 1939, we wrote to Father Pinakatt, asking him to send six well-educated young women who knew English and showed signs of a religious vocation, to enter training at Holy Family Hospital. It was understood that upon the completion of their three and a half years' course in nursing they would be formed into a religious community of Medical Mission Sisters with one of our sisters as novice mistress. On January 16th, 1940, the Most Reverend James J. Kalacherry, Bishop of Changancherry, approved the plan with the provision that in due course we would obtain the necessary permission from the Sacred Congregation of Oriental Rites, to which his diocese is subject. During the same month Father Pinakatt was able to write that he had chosen six girls, all of whom had the entrance requirements and were ready, as he himself expressed it, "to undergo any sacrifice and face any hardship for the cause."

Without delay Father Pinakatt made preparations for the long journey from the South of India to the North. For the six young women this was a courageous adventure indeed. It entailed completely new suroundings, different food, a new language, and above all, a change of religious atmosphere—from the vigorous Catholicism of Malabar to the strongly Mohammedan environment of the Punjab. However, there is a mysterious thread that links India from one end to the other, in spite of its kaleidoscopic variety. India is typically Indian in every nook and corner, and therein lies its strength and its charm.

Father Pinakatt himself described this first journey:

> "On Pentecost, May 12th, 1940, I started with five girls, after receiving the blessing of His Excellency, Bishop Kalacherry. We reached Rawalpindi on the 18th. It was a long and tedious journey, but we did not feel it so much. At Mylapore, at the tomb of St. Thomas, our dear Apostle who converted our forefathers, I offered Mass and all the girls received Holy Communion. We offered ourselves to follow in the Apostle's footsteps and to work for the glory of Our Lord and the salvation of India."

The young women soon proved that they were able to adjust themselves very well and were apt students. The sisters, in turn, gladly agreed to Father Pinakatt's request that they accept a second group of seven. He himself accompanied them in May 1941. It was, of course, a joy for all to meet once again, and Father was especially pleased to find his protégées so healthy and happy.

In September of the following year he wrote that he had arranged to send a third group of four, but was forced to wait on account of the fear of air raids and consequent disturbances. He also mentioned that Bishop Kalacherry frequently asked him: "Father, when will our dear sisters return from their training? Arrange that they return soon and take up the work." As His Excellency's silver jubilee was approaching he wished that the foundation of the new congregation be a memorial of this joyful event.

Finally, on the feast of St. Joseph, 1943, Father Pinakatt set out once more for Rawalpindi, this time with a group of four. Of the reunion at Holy Family Hospital he wrote: "It was a feast for us all. I was very happy to see all the girls very cheerful."

After spending six days at the hospital, he began his homeward journey, stopping on the way to call on several bishops, among them Archbishop Mathias of Madras, who assured him again that

Father Sebastian Pinakatt and Sister Alma Lalinsky, M.D., with a group of candidates from Malabar.

medical work is practical Catholic action and destined to do immense good for the progress of the Church in India. He also called at a tuberculosis sanatorium, where he found forty-two Catholic patients, among them two priests and four sisters. It was three months since a Catholic priest had visited there, and both the priest patients were too ill to celebrate Mass. Father stayed at the sanatorium until the following morning, when he offered Mass and gave Holy Communion to all the Catholic patients. Much moved by the experience, he wrote:

> "It was a feast day for me, as well as for them—a real Palm Sunday. It touched my heart to see our priests and sisters in sick beds in a Protestant hospital without the consolations of our Holy Faith in their greatest need. This sight spoke to me of the need of Catholic medical work and inspired me with new enthusiasm to work more zealously for the realization of our humble project . . "

Father Pinakatt's next letter, of November 1943, brought the good news that the first five candidates, after three and a half years' training, had successfully passed their nursing examinations in March and completed their midwifery course in November. After the examinations they returned to Malabar for a much merited holiday among their own families.

The same letter also informed us that a generous benefactor had donated ten acres of property on a hillock in Palai, South India. Here, on November 17th, His Excellency, Bishop Kalacherry, blessed the cornerstone for the motherhouse of the new community, in the presence of a huge crowd of priests, sisters and laity — both Catholic and non-Catholic. Writing of this glorious occasion, Father Pinakatt said: "Everything was providential and I do not know how to thank God . . . As I requested, the Bishop gave a new name to the hillock—Mary Giri, which means Mary's Mount. He had previously expressed the wish that the new congregation be placed under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Without delay the building was started in earnest—and soon a chapel and the most necessary rooms were erected. In the meantime, before the official opening of the novitiate, the all-important ecclesiastical permissions were obtained—namely, from His Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty and His Eminence, Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Both requests were granted wholeheartedly. On account of the difficulty of communication, the permission from the Sacred Congregation of Oriental Rites was taken care of by His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate of India. On July 3rd, Father Pinakatt wrote:

> "The three girls from the first group who persevered are with me at Mary Giri since Pentecost. They all reached here on the eve of the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians and spent three days in recollection as a preparation for the great feast. On the day of Pentecost I said Mass in the little chapel, sang the Te Deum, and gave Benediction. Thus the little community was begun. Some sisters from neighboring convents and other friends were also present. The Blessed Sacrament is kept in the tabernacle and we have an hour of adoration daily. Our joy will be full when Sister M. Pauline will be with us."

Owing to circumstances, Sister Pauline, the appointed novice mistress, and her assistant, Sister M. Vincent, were unable to leave Rawalpindi before the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. They were due to arrive in Malabar on July 21st, and from letters received from the pioneer candidates — Mary, Teresamma, and Mariamma —we are sure the sisters were given a hearty welcome.

The Malabar Medical Mission Sisterhood is launched, but we know from experience that the seas are not always smooth. Let us ask Mary, Star of the Sea, to guide this new community—that under her watchful care it may accomplish much for souls and bodies in India, the land hallowed by the preaching and martyrdom of one of the chosen twelve—the Apostle St. Thomas.

ANNA DENGEL, S.C.M.M.,M.D.

HIS EXCELLENCY, BISHOP KALACHERRY

A Dedication

by

THE MOST REV. JAMES J. KALACHERRY, D.D.
Bishop of Changanacherry, South India

An address given at the blessing of Mary Giri, the house of the Malabar Medical Missionaries.

We have great pleasure in associating ourselves with the laying of the corner-stone of the Indian Branch of the Medical Missionary Sisters. The idea of founding a sisterhood devoted to medical mission work originated with Father Sebastian Pinakatt, who happy to say, belongs to the first group of priests, whom we ordained immediately after our consecration in December 1927. His apostolic heart seems to have been already filled with this idea, for no sooner was he ordained than he approached us with his beautiful scheme. But then, though We were convinced of the utility, nay, even of the necessity of such an institution, We could not feel sure whether the time was yet ripe to make a start. We did not, all the same, fail to give him our warmest encouragement, recommending his scheme to his mature thought and his earnest prayers to know the Divine Will. Ever since that time, though engaged in parish work, he tried to find ways and means to realize his cherished scheme. We were always kept in close touch with the steps he took.

The choice of this very spot to found the first house of the Medical Missionary Sisters is really providential, and while we congratulate the Catholics of this place on the honour which is theirs in having the foundation laid here, we take occasion to record our appreciation of the generosity of those gentlemen who have made this function possible this evening on this beautiful ground. We do also hereby formally entrust the work to Father Pinakatt and grant him all necessary powers to carry on the work courageously to its full growth.

There is not much time left to expatiate upon the great religious and charitable significance of Catholic medical mission work. India is a land of poverty and disease. We need not go into statistics to prove our point. It is too well recognized to need any exposition. We are today starting an organization which will tackle the problem of disease and the appalling death rate. It is indeed a very ambitious program. But there is nothing too ambitious for Catholic charity.

We are today planting a seed. This seed like any other appears outwardly very insignificant, but like the mustard seed of the Gospel, or the seed of the jack fruit tree which you see around this place, it has the germ of vitality in it. One day the seed of this jack tree was inconspicuous but has developed into a stately jack tree that yields handsome fruits. Similarly the seed We plant to-day has great potentialities. God grant that it unfold its capabilities to the fullest extent.

We are happy to see before us, the first recruits, the nucleus of this Sisterhood. They have gone through a successful training in the Holy Family Hospital at Rawalpindi. While we congratulate them, We wish that these young girls present here in such large numbers may imitate their heroic sisters. We say heroic, for it is heroes who are wanted for a work of this kind. We wish to emphasize also that no one should be deceived by the external glamour, if there be any. The life of this kind of Sisterhood is, from the very beginning to the end, a life of self-denial assisted by Christian courage. Such being the case, let us encourage this enterprise by consecrating this place and the work begun, to our good Heavenly Mother. As a mark of the dedication We rename this place **Mary Giri,** that is, Mary's Mount. Let us hope that Mary, the Mother of all graces will take this house, whose foundation We lay today, and all connected with it, under her protection. In fine, We bless you all, and all those who in some way or other have helped and are going to help this work to grow, flourish and spread.

The St. Thomas Christians

by

The Rev. Sebastian Pinakatt

The story of the Christians of Malabar, who trace their membership in the Church to the missionary labors of St. Thomas the Apostle.

From time immemorial there has existed on the Malabar Coast, or the remote shores of South India, a body of Christians known as the "St. Thomas Christians." This community has at all times asserted itself coequal with the most ancient body of Christians in the world, claiming as its first teacher one of no later period than the very Apostolic Age. Tradition assigns the origin of the Church of Malabar to the labors of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

So powerful was the eloquence of the great teacher and his followers, and so great the moral grandeur of their characters, that whereas in many other parts of the world conversions were made mostly among uncivilized and illiterate people, in Malabar the Brahmins, the nobility of the country living in an atmosphere of culture, contributed in no small measure to the growth of the Christian Church. This body of Christians has attracted the interest of the historian, aroused the curosity of the traveller, and elicited the wonder and admiration of the antiquarian on acccunt of its age and its wonderful preservation in spite of many persecutions, amidst a heathen atmosphere.

The South Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas, one of the chosen twelve, is a convinced tradition supported by many valuable testimonies of early Fathers and writers — among them Abdias of the second century, Dorotheus of the third and St. Ephrem and St. Jerome of subsequent ages.

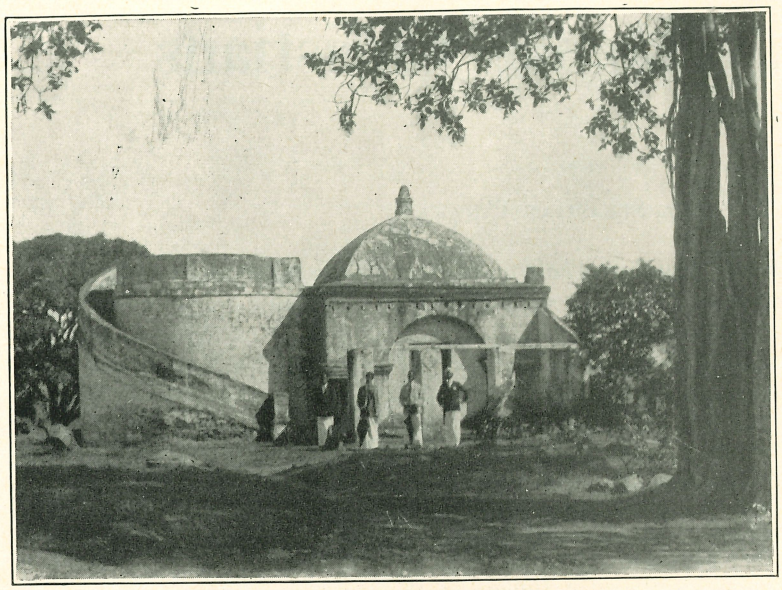
The year 52 A.D. is an epoch making date in the annals of the Malabar Church. It is related that St. Thomas reached India in that memorable year at a very opportune moment—the celebration of a royal wedding at Cranganore. As he was present on this occasion, the Saint told the assembly the glad tidings of the Gospel and strengthened his teaching by performing a miracle. This convinced many who were present, and they were received into the Catholic fold. A great incentive for further conversions was the reception of the sacrament of baptism by the royal household, together with many of the nobles. St. Thomas built a church at Cranganore for divine worship and ordained priests and consecrated bishops to carry on his divine mission. Then he travelled towards the South along the coast, converting many of the Brahmins to the new Faith. He gave stability and continuity to the infant Church by appointing bishops and priests to administer to the spiritual needs of the converts. He also built many churches, the most famous of which are those at Cranganore, Palur, Parur, Kottakava, Kokkamangalam, Chayol, Niranam and Quilon. Here and there he also erected crosses for the veneration of the Christians.

St. Thomas afterwards continued his mission to different parts of India, where again conversions were numerous. The miraculous growth of the Church and the rapid decline of idolatry and the disappearance of Hindu temples embittered the Brahmins who sought occasion to entrap the Saint. By divine intuition St. Thomas knew his end was near. Consequently he went about confirming the faithful and teaching them to live true Christian lives. Then he returned to South India, the field of his early labors and strengthened the converts in the Faith. It is believed that he received martyrdom in 72 A.D., when he went as usual to pray at Mt. Calamina or Chinna Mala in Mylapore. Thus the blood of this great martyr was shed for the preservation of the true Faith among his sons in India.

The body of the Apostle was honorably laid in a large and beautiful tomb in Mylapore, where it was as much venerated as that of St. Peter at Rome. In the fourth century his remains were removed by a Syrian merchant to the city of Edessa in Syria, where they were again interred.

St. Thomas made many conversions among the noble castes of the country and also among the Jews who had colonized in Malabar before the beginning of the Christian Era. It is probable that the St. Thomas Christians held their liturgical services in the East Syriac language, the language of Our Lord and St. Thomas, and the **lingua franca** throughout the East from the very beginning. Hence they are known as Syrian Christians. The parts of India which they inhabited include the present British Malabar, Travancore and Cochin State. Like their Hindu neighbors they speak Malaylam but retain many of their ancient social customs and traditions.

The infant Church of Malabar had to pass through many persecutions before reaching its present position. But the members held



Watch Tower on St. Thomas Mount in Madras

fast to the faith during the many vicissitudes, and by the dawn of the fourth century they formed a flourishing and influential community. Their position was further strengthened by a colony of Syrians from abroad led by Thomas Cana. He had brought with him a Syrian bishop, Mar Joseph by name, and there is every reason to believe that the rule of the Syrian bishops from abroad continued until the ninth century. In those primitive times and afterwards, owing to the difficulties of communication arising from geographical and political circumstances, local Christian communities enjoyed a kind of autonomy and had a canon law of their own. Only major questions were referred to Rome. The immediate authority in the case of the Malabar Christians was the Patriarch of Persia. Hence, though precluded from easy access to the influence of the center of Christendom, they were in communication with other distant Christian communities.

The history of the Malabar Church until the coming of the Portuguese is lost in obscurity and we have to rely mostly on South Indian tradition strengthened by the accounts of early travellers and historians to obtain even an outline of it. This little known period of its history has often been misunderstood and misrepresented and the orthodoxy of the community doubted. But the light thrown on it by the accounts of early historians and travellers and the deep-rooted conviction of the Malabar Christians themselves of their orthodoxy have explained away such doubts and complications.

We learn from "Cosmos" Christian topography that in the sixth century the Christian religion was flourishing in South India and that the faithful there were ruled by bishops ordained in Persia. We do not hear again of these bishops until the ninth century when mention is made by the Dominican historian, Le Quien, of the Malabar Church which practiced her ancient Faith under bishops sent from Salucia. Another link in the chain of the Malabar history is obtained from the "Anglo Saxon Chronicles," where it is related that Alfred, the Catholic King of England, sent alms to the St. Thomas Christians and offerings for the tomb of the Apostle at Mylapore. By the close of the ninth century two bishops, Mar Sapor and Mar Prodh, both famous for their sanctity, landed at Quilon to rule the Malabar Christians.

Next we hear of the St. Thomas Christians in the twelfth century, through the chronicles of Albercius, in which he states that Archbishop Mar John of India went to Rome via Constantinople to receive the pallium from the Pope. This shows that the Indian Church was free to cling to and actually did cling to her ancient Faith, refusing to receive another, although her immediate head, the Metropolitan of Persia, had proved unfaithful to his trust.

Passing to the thirteenth century we meet John de Monte Corvino, the first Latin missionary to visit India. About the same time Marco Polo, in 1291, speaks of the miracles wrought at the tomb of St. Thomas in Mylapore. Both these travellers make no allusion to the profession of any heresy by the Malabar Christians. Moreover, the belief of the St. Thomas Christians in the fourteenth century is discernable in the writings of the Papal Legate, Maringoli, who was sent to India by Pope Clement. He speaks of the St. Thomas Christians as the proprietors of pepper and as the masters of the public weighing office. During the fifteenth century we find ample proof of the orthodoxy of the St. Thomas Christians in a letter written in 1439 by Pope Eugenius IV. History tells us that the Malabar Christians had a king of their own and that the monarchs of this dynasty, known as the "Vellal vetta dynasty" became extinct only a few years before the advent of the Portuguese. To one of the last of these kings, Pope Eugenius wrote: "To my most beloved son in Christ, Thomas, the illustrious Emperor of the Indians, health and apostolic benediction. There has often reached us a constant rumor that your serenity and all who are subjects of your kingdom are true Christians." There can be no doubt that these words of the Holy Father prove that the Indian Church at that time was Catholic and professed Catholic communion with Rome.

(To be continued)

The Holy River Ganges

by

Sister M. Elise Wijnen, S.C.M.M., M.D.

At last, after endless writing and red-tape, the papers for the registration of Patna's Holy Family Hospital as a Nurses' Training School have come through. Now we **must** have a picnic for the nurses! But where shall we go? Well, that should be easy. In Patna there is only one place to go for an outing—and that is "down to the river." Not just any river, mind you, but the Holy River Ganges, the meeting place of all good Hindus, whose highest ambition is to be burned on its banks and have their ashes strewn over its muddy billows. Of course, they are quite willing to die comfortably of old age first. The sad part of it is that so few of them do die—"full of years."

Besides being "holy ground" the Ganges is also the recreation center for all the cities and villages along its banks. Woods are unknown in this part of the country; parks are few and far between; even open spaces are rare in the densely populated fertile valley. Everyone is driven to the water, to get away from the crowds and smells and enjoy a little scenery. Not that the Indians are very apt to go picnicking and boating for pleasure. The wealthy women live in seclusion, while the poor have all they can do to make ends meet. Neither kind has time or inclination for recreation, except to sit and talk. Only the men and children, particularly the young boys, go outside their homes to play.

Here we are at last, after a twenty minute walk, at our favorite spot along the Ganges. It is a lovely estate—an old house full of art treasures but empty of inhabitants, grounds beautifully kept and covered with flowers, a number of verandahs and porches built right to the water's edge, with stone staircases leading down to the river. No one would imagine that the crowded bazaar with all its smells and noises is just behind us. In front stretches the river, muddy brown at the bank but a scintillating blue in the center. The water is still fairly high, but will soon dry out to a narrow strip with wide sandy banks. Hence, all the houses along the river have high stone staircases and barricades to protect them against the floods.

Far out in the middle of the river a few junks are making their slow way downstream These shallow short brown boats, with the single square sails, fit into the picture perfectly. They may take three weeks to reach Calcutta, an eight hour journey by train. Loaded to the brim with various non-perishable goods, they drift downstream, helped or hindered by the fitful breezes, putting in at night wherever they happen to find themselves and carrying an occasional passenger as they go along. Some travel only short distances, transporting firewood, fruits, vegetables and other produce from the villages to the city markets. These are sailed, poled or rowed, as circumstances indicate.

One of them is just putting into shore a little way down. Watch the procedure—it's a fine illustration of the cheapness of Indian labor and the supreme disregard for speed and efficiency. The sailboat has edged as near to the bank as it can come without being grounded. A couple of dark-skinned men, dressed in nothing but loin-cloths, jump overboard and fasten the ropes to some stumps on the shore. Dozens of coolies, in ragged shirts and with dirty turbans wound around their heads, have come rushing up to the boat, shouting and gesticulating. One by one the large, flat, open baskets of papayas are handed overboard and landed squarely on top of the coolies' heads. Off they go, each with his load, balancing it skillfully and with perfect ease.

Several boats are lying there at the water's edge, loading and unloading. Around and in between them is much activity—washing and bathing, swimming and paddling, in play and in earnest.

Look at that old woman taking a bath! She has the technique down to a nicety, due to long years of practice. She has waded right in up to the hips, sari and all, and is now busy unfolding it and washing underneath, that is to say, rubbing the muddy water all over her chest and back. Then the legs are massaged, the same for the arms, and . . . heavens! She ducks her head under also, gargling and spitting the water with obvious relish. Well, now that she is wet from top to toe, she ought to be finished. But no indeed! She has her laundry to do. Off comes the sari, and with her body well submerged, she proceeds to give the brown rag a quick beating and rubbing. Finally, when everything is shipshape, with the wet sari around her she emerges from the water. On the shore is a clean sari, the one that was washed yesterday in the same fashion. This she dons over her wet one and then wriggles out of the soaking rag, which is next spread out on the sand to dry. The old woman sits beside it, drowsily resting after her exertions. In ten minutes the hot sun has done its work and the clean sari is bundled up. There she goes, the clothes on top of her head, leaning on a crooked stick and trudging through the sand, back to her hovel in the bazaar. She

must have gone through that performance every day for years!

Listen to that singing! There must be a Hindu temple close by. Yes, there it is, on top of that stairway—a small round shrine, empty except for a central stone table covered with fading marigolds, some red powder and a few grains of rice. A man is coming, his hands full of flowers, singing the monotonous, repetitious chant of Hindu **puja** (worship). He kicks off his shoes and enters the little temple. You can see the **puja** from here. It is a simple enough—a strewing of flowers on the table, an offering of rice, a sprinkling of red powder on forehead and flowers, a lighting of incense, all of this accompanied by the endless hymn, crooned in a half-loud, husky male voice.

But it is time to make our way back to the picnic ground. All along the riverbank people are packing up to return home before the sun goes down. Washed clothes are collected; small boys are dragged out of the water with much vituperation; goats and cows are chased back on the road. Bundles on heads, babies on hips and children clinging to saris, the coolie women make their way back home, let's hope to their one square meal a day. The sailboats are empty and deserted, except for an occasional **chowkidar** (nightwatchman). The sun is setting over the distant houses, tinting the clouds with fairy pink and gold. We'll have to hurry. Twilight is short in Patna.

"Shallow, short brown boats, with single square sails, drift downstream, helped or hindered by the fitful breezes . . ."

Brahmins, or Hindu holy men, cleanse themselves in the Ganges. Around their necks they wear the sacred thread. The signs on their forehead, are caste marks.

Photo from Three Lions

If you really want to see the river in top form, you must go down when there is a **mela.** This combination country fair and religious pilgrimage draws thousands of people from far and wide. They travel with only a small bundle of food and clothing carried at the end of a stick and a couple of babies and children on hips and shoulders. They sleep anywhere, in railway stations, along the roadside or on the riverbank. Early in the morning they come down for their bath, and then the water is scarely visible for the multitude of naked brown bodies wriggling in and up and down, each in about two feet of mud. Everyone bathes, gargles and drinks the muddy liquid, firmly convinced that blessings and prosperity will follow upon the conscientious discharge of these duties. Unfortunately the cholera and typhoid germs are not impressed by the holiness of the water. Epidemics follow these melas with monotonous regularity, but they fail to convey the inevitableness of cause and consequence to the people.

But withal, the Ganges flows on —the holy river of India, sacred to the Hindus—and a source of pleasure to all who recreate along its sandy shores.

When Famine Swept Bengal . . .

by

SISTER M. LAETITIA, S.C.M.M., R.N.

This description of the famine in Bengal reached us during the summer. It is given by one of the Medical Missionaries who served in a relief center and hospital in Dacca.

A man lay dead at the hospital gate; a few yards away another suddenly pitched forward on his face and was stlll; nearby a little child, naked and alone, took a long shuddering breath and died.

It was the first intimation of the terrible famine that was to sweep through Bengal and take an untold number of lives.

Naked, starving hordes began pouring into the towns. Dead and dying were everywhere. Hundreds of little children wandered about fighting the very dogs for a piece of blackened banana peel.

It seemed impossible to sit down to a good meal with so many hungry people at the door with nothing, nothing at all to eat. Yet, how could one feed hundreds, thousands, of them?

One morning, in desperation, one of the sisters picked up a starving child and put it to bed in the A.R.P. hospital and tried to feed it. Rather to her consternation, the Superintendent of the hospital walked in at that particular moment. However, he was very gracious and after some discussion he decided to allow the very ill cases to be admitted into the A.R.P. wards, if the sisters were willing to care for them. Willing to care for them! That was just what the sisters had been aching to do for days. So in streamed the patients—some on stretchers, some in lorries, others in bullock carts, some crawling on hands and knees. Quite a few were helped along by the inhabitants of the town. Immediately the beds were full and all available floor space occupied. The hospital was only a drop in a very large ocean.

Next door to the hospital was a jute firm which had some warehouses adjoining. One of the sisters suggested calling on the officer in charge. She and the Superintendent went over and found a rather decided looking business man. He hesitated to give any of his space.

"Come and see them," invited the Sister.

One look was enough, and with tears streaming down his face he gave not only the required space but sent his workmen to make it more habitable.

One poor woman, just a bundle of skin and bones, brought a skinny little baby up to the sisters.

"Oh, save it," she sobbed. "It is all I have left. Eight weeks ago I had everything in the world—a house, a bit of land, a husband and six children. Now I have nothing but this. First I sold my jewels to buy food; then all my saris went, even the tin trunk that I kept them in. After that we sold our piece of land, then the tin from our roof. That left us homeless, so we wandered out to try to find food. One by one I watched my children drop by the wayside—there was no food for them. Everyone was asking everyone else for rice, and there was not a grain to be had. At last my husband fell down dead, and I was left alone to wander on hopelessly. I came here when I heard that the sisters were giving out rice and even providing shelter."

Alas, the poor unfortunate baby was much too far gone for any treatment to be effective. That was too much for the sad little mother. Only the thought of her children had kept her alive, and a few hours later she followed her little one.

This whole family had been completely wiped out—eight of them. The same story was repeated over and over again. Many more women reached the hospital than men; they seemed better able to withstand the privations. Perhaps this was because most of them had been used to less, and in a way, to

a harder life than the men.

Often, the one or two children left would be in a better condition than the mother. Even when everyone seemed to have nothing she had still been able to sacrifice something for her children. Usually this meant her life. One of the most terrible sights of the famine period was to see children, little more than babies, wandering about the streets by themselves, with no clothes, practically no food, and above all, so alone.

How all these starving people wanted rice—except those entirely collapsed! But nearly all had violent dysentery, so it was impossible to give it to most of them. No wonder, they had eaten refuse, leaves, roots, anything and everything!

One of the hardest things was to have to refuse admission to many who needed food and food only. At meal times great crowds gathered outside and to give them something the sisters would order more rice than was actually needed by the patients. Here one would often see pathetic little scenes of unselfishness.

One starving little boy had secured a small handful of rice. A tiny tot of a girl standing near had none, and with what longing eyes she looked at the little boy! Poor child! He looked at his bit of rice; he looked at the pitiful longing face of the little girl, and very carefully he measured his bit of rice into two equal portions and gave her one. As the Sister said afterwards, "I have never given anyone as big a plate of rice as I did to that surprised boy."

But amid all the sorrow there were a few smiles. The Bengalis love fish heads. For them these are a great delicacy, and they are quite satisfied with only half of a very small head. One little rascal of three, who had been in the hospital for a few days and was no longer so hungry, flatly refused his supper because there were no fish heads available.

In serving rice to several hundred people there were always a few grains falling to the ground. One day a nice old Hindu woman came in and began grubbing up the grains from between the bricks.

"You must not do that," said the sisters. "They have been walked on and the floor is most infected."

"Baperi bap!" exclaimed the lady. "What do I care! I haven't even seen rice for the last fourteen days."

The woman was a Brahmin, a most fastidious caste that would never have touched anything but the best rice and nothing unclean.

Famine is a great caste leveller. When it's a case of starving, nobody cares what kind of rice it is, nor who cooks it—only let there be rice, and of course, the things that go with it, dhal, curry and above all, fish heads.

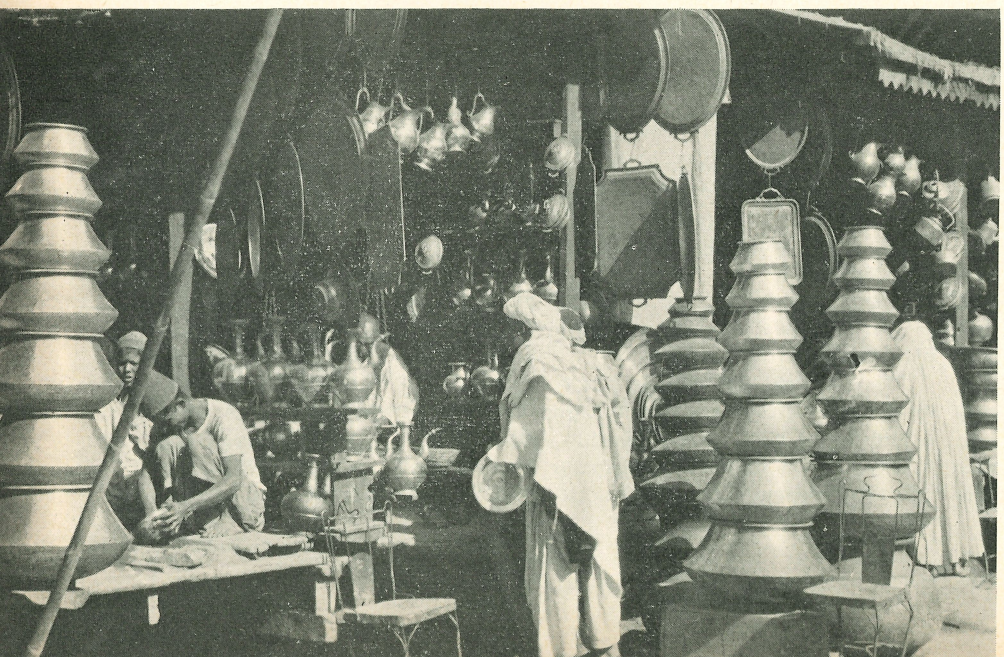
Ask Me Another

WHAT ARE THE SHOPS LIKE IN INDIA?

A real Indian store consists of a room with shelves around the three walls and a carpet on the floor. That's all! The merchandise sits on the shelves, and the proprietor and the customers sit on the carpet. Squatting on the floor is no hardship—and no sign of poverty either. In fact, it is preferred, as the most natural attitude.

Trading is done in the leisurely fashion of the Orient, with endless haggling and arguing, which is enjoyed by all. To walk into a shop, name your wants, pay and walk out again, seems nothing short of barbarian to the Indians. Only Americans, with plenty of money to spare, would be so foolish!

The story is told of an American soldier who walked into a store in Delhi and picked up a tin of cigarettes. He handed the owner a ten rupee note, the equivalent of about three dollars, half a month's salary for most Indians. The storekeeper hadn't



The Coppersmith Bazaar in Peshawar.

A "dip" on the way to school is not unusual during the monsoon in Bengal.

anywhere near the amount of change needed, as copper coins are very rare these days. He therefore politely refused the bill. The soldier had no idea what he was saying. After some remonstrances he pulled out **another** ten rupee bill! "Now that's positively all you're going to get!" said he, and left the store.

Most of the sales in the small shops patronized by the poor are done with one and two anna bits, about three cents for an average transaction. Food is bought, not by day, but by the meal! The poor have no means of storage, and food spoils very quickly in the hot humid climate. Twice a day the housewife, if she is not too **purdah,** otherwise the husband or an old servant, makes the rounds of the food stores, buying here a handful of rice or flour, there a few pice worth of spices, elsewhere some vegetables or a little **dhal** (lentils). If it is a feast day, they may indulge in a few lumps of boiled milk sweets, or a few pasteries. Usually the foodstuffs are exhibited in flat baskets or platters, placed on the ledge in front of the shop right alongside the streets.

Then there are the **kapra** shops, where cloth is sold by the bolt and by the yard; the pottery stores, which resemble our dime stores, with a little of everything; the drug-stores, which have the strange habit of selling only medicines; and the feast day stores, that sell the statues and pictures of the gods and goddesses, the tinsel, bracelets, toys, cheap hats and crowns, fireworks and garlands, in short, all the paraphernalia of the particular holy day. These shops appear and disappear overnight, with every national feast day.

In the wealthier sections one finds the bookstores, mostly second hand ones, also a few picture stores, a shoe emporium, a watch shop, and perhaps a grocery store that sells canned goods. The latter may be a little more elaborate, perhaps with a counter and a few chairs for European customers. But their activities are essentially the same as those of their poorer relations. In all the shops one thing is conspicuously absent— a telephone! No one orders anything over the phone in India.

HOW DO CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL IN INDIA?

There is no compulsory education in India, so whether a youngster runs the streets or learns his "Alif, Be, Pe," in the little dark room that constitutes the average Indian school depends entirely on the intelligence, interest and income of the parents.

There are some beautiful schoolhouses in India, but numerically they are insignificant. Yet much interest and emphasis is currently being placed on education, particularly on learning English. But it is not easy to make up for the long delay and indifference that have gone before. Right now India needs thousands of trained teachers, especially for the villages. But where to get them, that is the question.

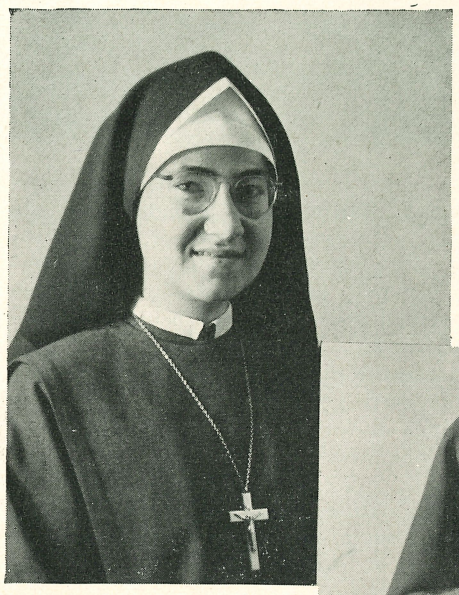
A small, truly native Indian school differs greatly from our conception of school. In the first place the type and manner of teaching are determined wholly by the religion of the children. Little Mohammed Ali learns the Koran by heart and laboriously traces the difficult Urdu script for hours on end. Young Sita Ram, his **dhoti** tucked up above his knees, sits cross-legged on the floor, printing the Hindi characters and reciting the sacred mythological stories of the Veda. The three R's in India are reading, writing and religion. Never mind the arithmetic! The **baniya's** (shopkeeper's) sons learn that at home from the time they can toddle.

The school hours are very different too, depending on the sun and the weather. In the cool season the people get up after the sun has warmed the earth a bit, around nine o'clock. School starts at ten and continues until two or three in the afternoon. In summer the schedule is reversed. Then the early morning hours are best, so the youngsters trot off to school as early as seven a.m. and are through for the day by eleven or twelve o'clock, when they go home for a wash, their first meal of the day and an afternoon siesta.

Some of the finest schools in India are maintained by the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. The Jesuits are famous in this field. To be an alumnus of St. Xavier's, be it from Bombay, Calcutta or Patna, is the proud boast of many an educated Indian. Many Hindus and Mohammedans, wholly uninterested in the Christian faith, often insist on sending their sons to the Catholic schools. Well do they know that the most conscientious educators are to be found among those who work, not for money, but for love of God.

News from Home and Abroad

AT HOME



Sister M. Andrew (left) and Sister M. Gemma

PROFESSION AND RECEPTION

On August 15th the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the ceremony of religious profession and reception once more marked the close of the eight-day retreat which is held twice a year at the Motherhouse. Two novices, Sister M. Gemma Tassinari, R.N. of Salem, Mass. and Sister M. Andrew Frey of Pittsburgh, Pa. pronounced their first vows in the Society, and received the blue veil and crucifix symbolic of the religious profession. Sister M. Gemma received her degree in nursing from the Mother Cabrini Memorial Hospital, Chicago, Ill. She did graduate work in pediatrics and before entering the Society worked at the Childrens' Hospital, Boston, Mass.

Three postulants were invested in the grey habit of the Medical Missionary. The new novices are: Miss Joanna Meutz of Noblestown, Pa., Sister M. Esther; Miss Anne O'Neill of Philadelphia. Pa., Sister M. Susanna; and Miss Mary C. Zosso of Chillicothe, Mo., Sister M. Daniel.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas F. McNally of Jenkintown, Pa., presided at the ceremony and offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He was assisted by the Rev. Harold W. Riley, C.S.C., who had previously conducted the retreat, and the Rev. John P. Lynch, C.S.C., chaplain at the Motherhouse. Father Riley also preached the sermon, pointing out simply, yet graphically and comprehensively the meaning of the religious life, its blessings, its advantages—and its sacrifices.

FROM INDIA

The letters from India that have accumulated during the summer months have brought a tremendous amount of news. Twice-happy are we over the good tidings —first of all for the formal opening of the novitiate of the Malabar Medical Mission Sisters in South India, and secondly for the recognition of Patna's Holy Family Hospital as a grade A training school for nurses. We have already commemorated the former elsewhere in this issue. As for the latter event—a letter from Sister M. Hedwig tells us —

"When the good news of the recognition of the hospital in Patna arrived we had to celebrate. What could be better than a picnic—so we picnicked in three lots—first the nurses, then we, and then the Santali's. Each group went to the only private place in Patna's bazaar — a a beautiful spot along the Ganges. We are getting so attached to the river that we have decided our new hospital will have to be on its banks.

"That new hospital idea might sound premature, considering all the building we've done already, but the fact is that we will need another extension soon. Our last adult bed is filled, and if that's the case, what will we do when the really busy months come?"

From Patna we also hear that Sister M. Laetitia, Superior at the

hospital, has been elected vice-president of the Catholic Hospital Association of India and appointed editor of the Association's quarterly paper. In the spring of this year Sister Laetitia was invited to attend a nurses' meeting which was called by the Government. On her return she wrote:

"So many nurses are needed here in India. We are going to try to treble the present number of nurses in a period of five years. That means immediate and larger training schools. The aim is one million trained nurses at the end of thirty years . . . "

* * *

DACCA

On May 9th Sister M. Pauline, who has since gone to take charge of the new novitiate in Malabar, wrote:

"Now the big news is—my work here in Dacca is finished. The famine has decreased, so only eighty beds will be kept open for those who are still sick. Our A.R.P. Emergency Hospital is now closed and stands empty. The staff has been dissolved, as this area is well defended and there is no immediate danger.

"Some time ago Sister Caecilia and I went to Toomiliah for the week end. It is a huge mission, located in a lovely spot. There are about 300 girls in the school, which is conducted by the Holy Cross Sisters. They also have a free canteen for 200 children who are fed there daily. They are admitted at the gate, where they line up according to religion — Mohammedan, Christian and Hindu. Each child brings it's own plate, usually a banana leaf. They all receive a very good helping of rice and spiced **dhal** (lentils), with an extra helping of vegetables twice a week. A different woman cooks for each of the religious sects. Many of the children were in a terrible state when they first came, but now their little bodies have filled out. Smallpox is still quite bad here, due to the crowding in the city, and vaccination seems to be no safeguard at all, as it is such a virulent type."

* * *

RAWALPINDI

By this time all the sisters from Holy Family Hospital must have had their turn at vacationing in Murree, a hill-station north of Rawalpindi. But, of course, we cannot tell you what they did, since mail is so long on the way. Sister M. Bernadette, however, had a rather unique experience in the dispensary not long ago, when she met Begum Jan, seventy years old, who had never yet looked into a mirror! Sister writes:

"You can imagine her joy when we gave her a little mirror! She went out into the garden and sat there about an hour, looking at herself. She thought it all very wonderful and was so pleased with the little mirror that she gave me an eight annas for 'tea', because we had made her so happy. One of the other patients told her that she had better give the annas for the church 'because the Sister Sahiba is not going to spend it on herself.' I had to smile at that, and told her we would light some candles for her intention in our little chapel."

The hospital, so badly needed in Rawalpindi, is still as crowded as ever, and is getting more and more so every day. Summer brought another flood of letters from the sisters — with the same plea — "more room, please, and more beds!" But plans for a larger hospital have been made. Sister M. Dolores writes:

"You should see the plans for the new hospital. We should certainly be able to do a lot of good work in a place like that. We have completely outgrown the hospital here. The busy season has started and with it comes the too frequent: 'I had to send three, or four, etc. patients away today—no beds.' In the new hospital we shall have room for lots and lots of patients, with a large training school for the nurses."

R. I. P.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of:

Most Rev. Henry Streicher, Bishop of Uganda.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Johnson, Washington, D.C.

Rev. William P. Rootes, C.M., St. Louis, Mo.

Rev. William Tally, Providence, R.I.

Mother Mary Celestine, St. Fracis, Wis.

Mother Mary Stanislaus, O. S.F., Milwaukee, Wis.

Sister Eileen Marie, Maryknoll, N.Y.

Sister M. Rena, Holy Cross, Ind.

Elizabeth Smith, Point Richmond, Calif.

Frances Renner, Westpoint, Neb.

Mrs. Henry Hurst, Philadelphia, Pa.

John J. Wickham, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Mr. Henry Terheyden, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Pvt. Gordon Sweeney, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

WE RECOMMEND TO YOUR PRAYERS THE MISSION INTENTION

FOR SEPTEMBER — THE EDUCATION OF AFRICAN YOUTH

Walls Are Only Single Stones--United!

When the builder of the Great Wall of China was asked how he had accomplished this remarkable feat, he replied,

"The wall is but a mass of trifling stones, set one upon the other."

Whether it be China, 214 B.C., or India, 1944 A.D., the principle is still the same.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The prayers, work and alms—of many—are the stones that build churches, hospitals and schools in mission lands.

The Prayers, work and alms—of many—are needed, **urgently needed,** to build a new hospital in Rawalpindi, India.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We invite you to join now—to help build up another bulwark of charity—a new 200-bed hospital—in the missions.

WILL YOU GIVE YOUR SHARE — THE SHARE THAT IS NEEDED TO BUILD THE WHOLE?

Mother Anna Dengel
8400 Pine Road
Fox Chase, Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mother Dengel:

To help you spread the cause of Christ in mission lands I enclose $.....for Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi, India.

Very sincerely,

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